

**Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting a Request for Additional Funds To Support Recovery Efforts in the Gulf Coast**

*February 16, 2006*

*Dear Mr. Speaker:*

Hurricane Katrina was one of the worst natural disasters in our Nation's history. Katrina devastated an area roughly the size of Great Britain. This devastation has required an unprecedented response by Federal, State, and local governments, as well as the private sector. So far, the Federal Government has committed more than \$87 billion in spending and \$8 billion in tax relief for the people of the Gulf Coast and New Orleans.

To provide additional resources to assist the region in its recovery, I ask the Congress to consider the enclosed requests, totaling \$19.8 billion. This request includes critical funding to: replenish the Department of Homeland Security's Disaster Relief Fund in support of ongoing response efforts; support the Small Business Administration's Disaster Loan program; provide funding for the Community Development Block Grant program to support Louisiana's flood mitigation plans; achieve my commitment through the Corps of Engineers for stronger and better levee protection for New Orleans; and continue rebuilding of the region's Federal infrastructure.

I urge the Congress to act expeditiously on this request to ensure that the Federal response and recovery efforts continue uninterrupted. I designate this proposal in the amount requested herein as an emergency requirement.

The details of this request are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

**George W. Bush**

**Remarks on the War on Terror and a Question-and-Answer Session in Tampa, Florida**

*February 17, 2006*

**The President.** Thank you all. Please be seated. Thanks for the warm welcome. Thanks for the warm weather. [*Laughter*] It's nice to be back here. I just came from MacDill, where I was talking to General Abizaid and General Brown, and one of the things that's clear is folks there at MacDill really do appreciate the support that the citizens of the communities of Tampa and St. Pete and the surrounding area provide them. So I want to thank you all very much for being—[*applause*].

I'd like to share some thoughts with you and then answer questions as time allows, if you've got any. First, I send Laura's greetings. She's doing great, by the way. She's a fantastic First Lady and—[*applause*]. She's obviously got to be a woman of enormous patience. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate Congressmen Adam Putnam, Bill Young, Mike Bilirakis, and Katherine Harris for being here today. Oh, there they are, yes. Proud to give them a ride on Air Force One. [*Laughter*] Some of them aren't going back, by the way. [*Laughter*] Mark Kennedy—is Mark here with us, from Minnesota? I think he was going to drop by—he supposedly was going to be here. You don't know him because he's from Minnesota, but I do, and he's a fine guy. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank my buddy Mel Sembler, Ambassador Sembler, who represented our country so well, once in Australia under 41, and then to Italy under 43—and Betty. I want to thank the Chambers of both Tampa and St. Pete. I want to thank the mayors from Tampa and St. Pete—Mayor Iorio and Mayor Baker are with us. Thank you both for coming. Appreciate you being here.

I didn't mean to take you away from your work. Any excuse is a good one on Friday, right? [*Laughter*] So long as I keep the speech short. I want to thank members of the statehouse who are here. I want to thank you all for letting us use this beautiful facility. And thank you for coming.